

Talking Points for Resource Managers

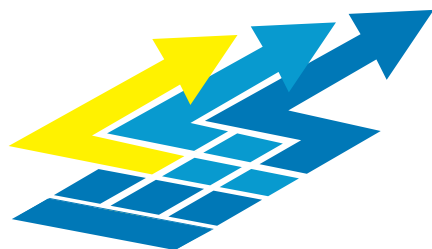
Resource Managers are a key resource in Promoting the Employment First Initiative. The talking points below are intended to support your efforts with providers in promoting the department's Employment First Initiative.

Why is the department focusing on employment now?

- CT is one of 13 states that participate in the supported employment leadership network, (SELN) which is committed to enhancing employment options for people with Intellectual Disabilities.
- CMS has provided CT with a Medicaid infrastructure grant to support employment for people with intellectual disabilities. Connecticut is a recipient of these grants funds through Connect-Ability.
- We are slowly climbing out of one of worst economies in decades. We can't wait for the economy to recover. We will miss out on opportunities now and in the future.
- Resources are available right now to improve the expertise of public and private staff on best practices for employment and to raise expectations for employment for people with intellectual disabilities.
- A paycheck provides greater financial security and empowers people to have more choices in control of their life.
- Self Advocates are asking for real work for real pay and leading this initiative. CT has both private and public support for self advocates across the state.
- This is a state wide interagency collaboration on employment. (BRS, DDS, DSS, DOL)
- We support many people from an early age. The earlier we prepare people for employment the greater their chances of success.

What is the department doing to support this initiative?

- The Department has provided some financial incentives for providers to encourage more employment options for people with Intellectual Disabilities and to provide additional training for staff on a wide variety of employment topics.
- The department is working with private providers on revising the rate structure for employment services. Some of these revisions include rates for intakes, assessments and job development, placement fees and retention fees.



DDS Employment First Initiative
Real Work for Real Pay

- The department is putting together resource materials and user friendly fact sheets for all stake holders to simplify a variety of topics that have been identified in surveys.
- The department is looking at new ways to provide training on some key topic areas that have been identified in the surveys like Job Development and Job Customization.
- The department has two pilot programs: one is to support people to move from GSE to SEI or competitive employment and one to test a new career plan for employment. Both Pilots are under way and we expect to use the information from these pilots for continuous improvement.
- The department is requiring all people with a level of need of 1, 2, or 3 to have an employment goal in their Individual Plan unless granted an exemption.
- The department is providing training to case managers on the inclusion of employment goals in the Individual Plan.

Why Should Providers be interested in the Employment First Initiative?

- This is a values based initiative. Employment is good for everyone. There are a group of providers who have been waiting for this initiative. These providers will take the lead and others will follow. Know the providers who are enthusiastic in your region. They will be good examples to use when talking to other providers.
- The timing is right. Always start a new position at the bottom. You can only go up from there. The economy is coming off the bottom slowly. When it rebounds we will be ready to benefit.
- This initiative will target people at an early age. The expectations will be greater over time for employment options for graduates. Many providers will want to be in a position to meet the future needs of these consumers. Providers who do not currently have employment programs may want consider adding this to list of service offerings.

Why should employers be interested in hiring a person with an intellectual disability?

- People with disabilities are a very important part of our diversity as a country and to ignore them is not only counterproductive in the workplace, it also makes no sense in the marketplace.
—Neil Romano, Former Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor,
Keynote at HireAbility Day 2010, Spokane
- As we struggle out of a deep recession, the recovery will include and rely on all of us.
- Private sector employers, both large and small, remain the backbone of our efforts to employ people with disabilities. Over the decades they have led the way and grown along with the rest of us in the efforts to seek new and better ways to hire and keep employees. Today's employers are more apt to have attended school with classmates with disabilities in their classes. With growing numbers of people working and contributing in public settings, hiring someone who happens to have some obvious challenges is becoming a more typical part of their human resource efforts.

These are some examples of goals to discuss with providers for their annual continuous quality improvement plans.

DAY PROVIDERS WHO OFFER EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

1. Establish a minimum staff training goal specific to real work for real pay
2. Establish a specific goal (#) for completion of career plans
3. Establish a specific goal (#) of people who will move from GSE to at least part time competitive job
4. Based upon current baseline, increase the number of job development hours per week from X to X
5. Establish a specific goal of career exploration opportunities offered to people
6. Increase number of hours per week from baseline to 20 hours of paid employment for (X number of people)
7. Increase average weekly earnings from X to X

NON EMPLOYMENT DAY PROVIDERS

1. Assess the level of interest that program participants might have in pursuing employment
2. Offer participants X opportunities for career exploration
3. Establish X number of career oriented volunteer opportunities for individuals to provide exposure to possible employment settings
4. Assess technology needs of X individuals that might support employment path

RESIDENTIAL PROVIDERS

1. Assist X individuals to develop and identify a personal network to enlist with a job search
2. Assist X individuals with a support plan to enhance their soft skills through participation in a structured class/program such as Epic 2 (an online soft skills training program for consumers).
3. Assist X individuals to visit employment settings for exposure and to assess interest
4. Identify specific home chores that will enable someone to develop potentially marketable employment skills